

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-25

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C O N F I D E N T I A L ANKARA 7281

EO 11652 GDS

TAGS: PINT, TU

SUBJECT: RIFT IN COALITION

REF: A) ANKARA 7033; B) ANKARA 7083

1. RIFT IN COALITION BETWEEN REPUBLICAN PEOPLES PARTY (RPP) AND NATIONAL SALVATION PARTY (NSP) HAS BECOME MORE PRONOUNCED WITH FURTHER EXCHANGES OF PUBLIC REMARKS BY PRIMIN ECEVIT AND DEP PRIMIN ERBAKAN:

A. ECEVIT CAUSED CONSIDERABLE FLURRY OF SPECULATION BY TELLING REPORTER SEPTEMBER 6 THAT HE WANTED EARLY ELECTIONS (NEXT SCHEDULED GENERAL ELECTIONS ARE IN 1977). HE IMMEDIATELY QUALIFIED STATEMENT BY SAYING IT WOULD BE VERY DIFFICULT TO GET PARLIAMENTARY DECISION FOR SUCH ELECTIONS.

B. ERBAKAN RESPONDED IN SPEECH AT IZMIR SEPTEMBER 9 OPPOSING GENERAL ELECTIONS ON GROUNDS COUNTRY NEEDED TO CONCENTRATE EFFORT

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ON CYPRUS PROBLEM, AND PREDICTING THAT "THOSE WHO WANT TO TURN

THE CYPRUS VICTORY INTO VOTES WILL BE THWARTED IN THEIR AMBITION."

C. ECEVIT, WHEN REPORTERS QUESTIONED HIM SEPTEMBER 10 ABOUT ERBAKAN'S SPEECH, REPLIED THAT HE HAD TAKEN EVERY OCCASION TO ATTRIBUTE CYPRUS SUCCESS TO WHOLE COUNTRY AND ESPECIALLY ARMED FORCES. HE DENED THAT THERE HAD BEEN ANY EFFORT TO WIN VOTES FROM CYPRUS OPERATION.

D. ECEVIT REPORTEDLY TOLD RPP EXECUTIVE BOARD SEPTEMBER 11 THAT ERBAKAN WOULD NOT RPT NOT BE DESIGNATED ACTING PRIMIN WHILE ECEVIT VISITS SCANDINAVIAN COUNTRIES SEPTEMBER 18-30. INSTEAD, RESPONSIBILITY WOULD BE GIVEN ONE OF TWO RPP MINISTERS OF STATE, EYUBOGLU OR BIRLER. AFTER DISCUSSING RPP-NSP DISAGREEMENTS, HE ASKED BOARD TO MAKE DECISION SEPTEMBER 16 ON COALITION'S FUTURE.

E. ON SAME DAY, BUT APPARENTLY BEFORE LEARNING OF ECEVIT'S LATEST STATEMENT, ERBAKAN SAID GOVERNMENT PAID NO ATTENTION TO PRESS STORIES OF COALITION'S DIFFICULTIES, AND THAT COUNTRY HAS NO TIME TO WASTE ON POLITICAL UNREST.

2. RPP SEC GEN (AND MINISTER OF STATE) EYUBOGLU ANNOUNCED SEPTEMBER 10 THAT PARTY WOULD BRING LIBEL SUITS AGAINST NEWSPAPERS WHICH HAD PRINTED ALLEGATIONS THAT VARIOUS RPP MINISTERS HAD OPPOSED CYPRUS INTERVENTION (REF B) -- ALLEGATIONS WHICH ARE WIDELY BELIEVED TO HAVE BEEN STARTED BY NSP.

3. SPECULATION WIDESPREAD HERE THAT ECEVIT EITHER WILL FORM NEW COALITION WITH DEMOCRATIC PARTY (DP) OR WILL FORM MINORITY GOVERNMENT. DP VICE CHAIRMAN ONSAL TOLD REPORTERS SEPTEMBER 11, HOWEVER, THAT HE SAW NO POSSIBILITY OF BRIDGING DIFFERENCES OF OUTLOOK BETWEEN RPP AND DP.

4. COMMENT: CONFLICT IN COALITION HAS REACHED POINT AT WHICH RPP-NSP PARTNERSHIP, ALWAYS UNEASY, IS NOW IN INCREASING DIFFICULTY, ALTHOUGH SOME TIME MAY YET PASS BEFORE ACTUAL BREAK-UP IS REACHED. DECISION NOT TO DESIGNATE ERBAKAN ACTING PRIMIN IN ECEVIT'S ABSENCE NO DOUBT PROVOCATIVE TO NSP; HOWEVER, SEEMS UNLIKELY THAT NSP WOULD WISH TO ACCEPT ONUS OF BREAKING UP GOVERNMENT AT CRITICAL TIME BY RESIGNING OVER THIS AFFRONT.
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5. AS TO EARLY ELECTIONS WHICH ECEVIT SAYS HE WANTS, TURKISH CONSTITUTION PROVIDES TWO PROCEDURES FOR DECISION TO HOLD EARLY ELECTIONS: (A) UNDER ARTICLE 69, DECISION CAN BE MADE BY MAJORITY VOTE OF PARLIAMENT; (B) UNDER ARTICLE 108, PRIMIN CAN ASK PRESIDENT TO CALL EARLY ELECTION AFTER THREE VOTES OF NO-CONFIDENCE, TWO OF WHICH MUST BE IN 18-MONTH PERIOD. TO USE FIRST PROCEDURE,

WHICH OBVIOUSLY WOULD BE SMOOTHER AND FASTER, ECEVIT WOULD NEED PRIOR AGREEMENT WITH MEMBERS OF HIS OWN PARTY AND ALLIANCE WITH OTHER PARTIES THAT WOULD PROVIDE MAJORITY IN FAVOR. PERSUADING SUCH MAJORITY TO RISK OWN SEATS COULD BE HIGHLY DIFFICULT.

6. MEANWHILE, OUR IMPRESSION IS THAT COALITION'S INTERNAL TROUBLES SO FAR DO NOT HAMPER ECEVIT'S HANDLING OF CYPRUS MATTERS. CLEARLY, HOWEVER, DISSOLUTION OF COALITION COULD BE EXPECTED TO CREATE SERIOUS DISTRACTIONS FROM CURRENT MAJOR CONCERNS IN FOREIGN AFFAIRS.
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